

Architecture and Design  
in the Fairhope Single Tax Colony:  
Creating a Sense of Place

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In my honor as a student I have neither given nor received aid on  
this paper.

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The founding of a new town, especially a model utopian community such as Fairhope, Alabama, affords a rare chance to see how people make building decisions about type, style, and usage. In a utopian experiment, where there is a stated ideology, one can study whether architecture and environmental design manifest the community's values. When a group of colonists landed in Baldwin County, Alabama in 1894 to found the utopian community of Fairhope, they arrived with the intention of demonstrating to the nation the potential of the single tax to solve society's inequities. As formulated by Henry George, the single tax applied to the "unearned increment" a landowner received when his property appreciated in value due to community created interest in that land. George allowed the community to appropriate that which it created, and allowed the individual to keep what he created. Thus there would be no taxes on wealth so the worker would not be deprived of his rightful earnings, and the land would be put to its best use. If the community rectified this oversight in the tax system, George believed there would only be a need for one tax, hence the name. This was the theoretical base on which the Fairhoppers constructed their colony. When looking at the architecture and design of Fairhope, one asks two questions: did the colonists' theories have any effect on the way they built, and does the physical realization of the community offer any insight into the personality of its residents. The architecture and environmental design of Fairhope during the first ten years of settlement show that the colonists

sought to realize in physical form their interpretation of the single tax as put forth by George. The achievement of this goal came about through the efforts of the colony council and the community at large.

A utopian community, such as Fairhope, tends to differ from a typical town in ways that Dolores Hayden defines in her book Seven American Utopias. Hayden looked at these aspects in the context of seven utopian experiments to see if they affected the design of these communities. One of the essential issues of community life that she isolated was the balance between private and communal space, showing the degree to which the members were involved with each other and how much individuality they retained. Building patterns were also affected by the colony's organization - whether design decisions were handed down by a small group of leaders, decided upon by the community at large in group meetings, or left to the individual to determine. What went on inside the buildings as far as usage, and what went on outside as far as relating to the landscape also serve to tell something about the community's personality. Each of these aspects of communitarian design are useful to keep in mind when looking at Fairhope.

Another significant factor to keep in mind when studying the building of Fairhope is seeing it in context to the larger movements in architecture at that time. The period in which Fairhope was founded was an important time in American architecture. The Victorian style with its emphasis

on singularity shown through its eclecticism and asymmetry still predominated in America. But new ideas were rapidly coming onto the scene. Chicago was the scene of much of this activity, primarily because a major fire had cause the city to have to rebuild giving architects a chance to experiment. The concept of city planning found a champion in Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, and he would provide an ample illustration of its potential in his design for the White City which was a part of Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893. The visitors to the fair also saw an example of zoning, which like the single tax was meant to arrest unlimited land speculation. (1) Important Chicago architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright had been affected by the populist rhetoric which glorified the frontier and the individuals who tamed it.

This same rhetoric would have been in the cultural baggage of the Fairhope colonists, of whom several had been involved in the populist movement. The Fairhoppers had other common traits: they were almost exclusively from the Midwest, particularly Iowa, exceptions being several families that would come from Pennsylvania, and the Pollays from Vancouver. Thus moving to the Deep South represented a dramatic change, not only geographically and climatically, but also culturally. From the style in which the Fairhoppers built one can glean a sense of their acclimation to their new home, and how much they tried to preserve their Northern heritage. One corollary to the single tax would be a renewed love of the land, thus landscape architecture would

figure into the discussion of the building of Fairhope. The relationship between the system of government and the building process tells much about the colony: were design decisions handed down from the top or was there an interchange of ideas. And finally, how did the single tax and the concept of co-operative individualism find expression in the creation of Fairhope?

To understand Fairhope's architectural statements, one must first isolate it from the mainstream of American design. Principal to this discussion is the notion of vernacular architecture. Hayden noted one anthropologist's definition of vernacular building styles "as typified by a small number of building types, adapted to various needs ... constructed in local materials by members of a defined culture who build in a tradition agreed upon by all." (2) She also observed that vernacular traditions rather than published plans had more influence on communitarians. (3) The influence of published plans did filter down to the colonists as some of them built in the style of the "Victorian Cottage Residence." (4)

Victorian Cottage Residences was the name of a book published in 1842, and written by architect Andrew Jackson Downing. This book not only presented plans and descriptions of houses and other buildings, but also contained Downing's thoughts on everything from the correct colors for barns to the proper materials for building. This along with another Downing book, Country Houses, reflected the author's attempt to improve the condition of housing in America. He gave three reasons why

his "countrymen should have good houses. These reasons were as follows: 1) "a good home ... is a powerful means of civilization" 2) "the 'individual home' has a great social value for a people" 3) "there is a moral influence in a country home" all in keeping with the Victorian idea that a building should be both morally uplifting and aesthetically pleasing. (5) Both the plans and the ideas behind them were widely disseminated around the country.

Since Downing himself was a New York native, his designs reflected the Northern vernacular tradition, and he gave aesthetic justification to certain features of northern buildings that had evolved more out of necessity than appearance. One of these features was the centrally located chimney which Northerners favored building because such an arrangement provided more heat, an obvious concern during long, cold Northern winters. The steeply pitched roof which allowed snow to slide off was another feature found on most Northern houses.

In contrast, Southern houses, such as the ones the colonists would have encountered in Baldwin County, tend to be build to resist summer heat and humidity. Southern architecture also has strong roots in the style of the French who at one time ruled a good portion of the South including the Mobile Bay area. Also Southern architecture has traditionally been more open to the classical building style which itself originated in a warm climate. Southern houses tend to have flat roofs to increase shade, and chimneys at opposite ends of the house to create a



passageway which encourages airflow. Porches are an integral aspect of Southern architecture since they provide a room that is open to the outside making it cooler than the rest of the house. Early nineteenth century houses in Point Clear, Baldwin County had slatted eaves that allowed the wind to rise up through the roof further cooling the house. (6) Point Clear houses were also raised up on brick piles and had wide interior halls.

Upon arrival in Baldwin County in November 1894, the colonists were housed with local families. E.B. Gaston wrote a description of the house in which he stayed for the Fairhope Courier, showing his perception of the native architecture. The house in which he stayed had all the typical Southern features, particularly a porch, which Gaston went to great lengths to describe, giving one the impression he had never seen one before. He also noted the chimney placement saying the house has "old-fashioned exposed chimneys [i.e. on the ends of the house]," showing perhaps his belief in the sophistication of the Northern style of building. (7)

Besides the architectural traditions which the colonists brought with them, they also came with their utopian ambitions. The single tax vision of Henry George's Progress and Poverty was intended to show the "balancing mechanism between city and country." (8) George used many images of nature to convey his vision of utopia,

"To remove want and fear of want ... would be like turning water into a desert. The sterile waste would clothe itself with verdure, and the barren places where the life seemed banned would ere long be dappled with the shade of trees and musical with the song of birds." (9)

His promised land borders on the pastoral ideal which also inspired the picturesque tradition that Downing worked within.

George was not the only influence on the Fairhoppers: many had read Edward Bellamy's utopian novel Looking Backward which had its own vision of what future cities would look like. The main character Julian West "surveyed a transformed Boston, at his feet were miles of broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings... ." (10) Bellamy also condemned residential segregation by class when he had West say, with the benefit of his sojourn in the twentieth century, about 1887, "For it must be understood that the comparative desirability of different parts of Boston for residence depended then, not on natural features, but on the character of the neighboring population." (11) Images such as these surely fed the imaginations of the town planners as they sat down to lay out the future Fairhope.

Not long after the arrival of the first settlers, Gaston articulated what he called "true co-operative individualism" which was the synthesis of contemporary ideas tempered with a dose of pragmatism. He claimed that Fairhope will have a more realistic view of human nature than previous social experiments. This approach was not necessarily a pessimistic one, instead the orientation would be to the average ordinary person. He wrote, "We have sought to build for humanity as it is - not the worst,



not the best - but plain every day average humanity seeking its own interest." (12) Accentuating the positive aspects of ordinary things would be a theme for Courier descriptions, especially in regard to building.

At a meeting held on December 15, 1894 in Battles, the colony council began to draw up plans for its newly purchased tract of land. They decided that "the south portion of the tract ... be the first platted and settled upon." (13) From the beginning, Fairhope made its major public design decisions within the confines of the council. This paralleled the zoning movement's belief that by sacrificing certain immediate individual liberties, the community could obtain a higher good for all. The council's commitment to the common good can be seen in the December 27, 1894 decision to set aside the bay front property for use by the entire association, an admirable gesture since this was the most desirable site in the tract. (14) The first structure the colony specified be built was a tool shed which served as an adjunct to the building of the settlers' homes. As early as Jan. 15, 1895 when Fairhope was little more than a cleared spot of land, Gaston already extolled Fairhope's potential to be a great resort.

Although the Fairhope Industrial Association executive took charge of laying out streets and dividing up the land, the Courier made it clear to the readers that the Association would not dictate what sort of houses people could build. (15) As far as public buildings, the store came after the tool-shed, with the

Superintendent of Public Services responsible for overseeing its construction. (16) The first houses in Fairhope, the E.B. Gaston and Mershon homes, were simple wood structures having only two or three rooms. These were two of the five houses planned "to be erected at once." (17)

Domestic architecture would be the primary activity at Fairhope since it had little in the way of industry and its organization did not require many buildings, in fact one building contained all public functions for several years. Eventually, Fairhope houses tended to fit into a pattern and share similar characteristics. This resulted from the cultural merging of North and South, as well as the limited variety of building materials, and the predominance of one or two builders. Available building materials in particular regulated the physical appearance of Fairhope houses. Almost without exception the houses were built of wood. There was a local deposit of brick clay according to the Courier; however, no brick works ever seemed to be firmly established. (18) For the benefit of Courier readers, S.S. Mann detailed the materials and costs of building a four room, one-and-one half story house. (19) He figured a total cost of \$175, not counting recompense for his own labor. The largest single expense was lumber followed by windows and carpentry work. With these early houses, construction speed and relative durability were the primary goals which precluded much consideration of style. By 1898, a saw-mill was in operation

which included a shingle mill which fulfilled the demand for roofing materials. (20) Much later Fairhoppers would turn to concrete as a material because it was cheap and had some cooling abilities. (21)

The Fairhope house that a family would call home would go through several stages before achieving a finished look. Depending upon the resources a newly arrived family had, they would start on a house ranging in size from three to nine rooms. As the housing stock enlarged, new settlers could often rent these early houses from families that had chosen to build a larger or better-situated dwelling. If a family did not move to larger house within a few years, they would upgrade their existing home by adding galleries, rooms and more sophisticated interior touches such as plastering and paneling. A good example of this is given by E.B. Gaston himself:

"The editor and family are rejoicing in the completion of a gallery in front of their house and other much needed betterments. Starting in '95 with one room, 16 x 26, we have gradually widened out until a floor space ten feet wide has been added entirely around the original building, affording four additional rooms."  
(22)

Possibly the requirement that a colonist would either have to build or secure his own home may have weeded out some of the perennial colonists of that era who took advantage of group homes to move from colony to colony. Intention to build a house called for a strong commitment to Fairhope's success, since a colonist would have to expend time and money to construct a potentially permanent home.

When the colonists set out to build, they grafted on some features of the local architecture to the vernacular style of the place from whence they came. The adoption of the porch was a self-conscious process, as some Fairhoppers had to learn what one was in the first place. E.B. Gaston observed "in this country it is hard to tell which are of the most importance, rooms or galleries." (23) Many Fairhoppers compromised by clipping a corner of their box-shaped houses to create a recessed porch. The Southern style, in contrast, extended beyond the house although the same roof covered both. This method is derived from the manner of construction of the early French settlers in the region who created galleries by bring the roof out beyond the structure and supporting it with posts.

The Fairhoppers continued to build steeply pitched roofs and some centered chimneys although the mild Alabama winters hardly warranted these measures. To these Northern natives, these attributes may have been so integral to their idea of a house that no climatic argument would persuade them to build any other way. Other Midwestern groups that settled in Baldwin County tended to build in this way as well. (24) The Fairhoppers seemed to have a strong sense of their Northern roots reflected in their invitations to Northerners to winter in Fairhope, reassuring them that they would feel quite at home. Annual dinners for settlers

of Northern origins were held, and since a Dec. 1, 1896 informal survey by the Courier showed that nearly all the settlers were from the Midwest, such a dinner would have been open to virtually all the colonists.

As a result of Fairhope's attempts to become a major resort, many houses in Fairhope took up an ancillary usage of housing summer and winter boarders. Because Fairhope did not have a hotel during its first two years, boarding was essential for the resort business. This practice lead to some households running informal inns within their homes even after a hotel was built at Fairhope. The Courier proposed "A Scheme" whereby certain Iowa persons could winter at Fairhope. (25) This scheme involved for or five people pooling their labor and funds to build a simple one-room house with a fireplace that they could come back to year after year. They could, according to this idea, take their meals with local households, or build their own kitchen house if they had the wherewithal, and then share the cooking duties. Although the article directed this idea to specific people, it did provide a model for wintering in Fairhope.

Despite the "creative adaptations" that transformed dry-goods boxes into dining room tables, Fairhoppers did come to have amenities inside and outside their homes. (26) Some Fairhope homes were colorfully painted, such as Dr. Clara Atkinson's which was painted light yellow on one story, and moss green on the other. (27) Most houses tended to be white, however, but they might have colorful trim. Bay windows and French doors brought

more light into the houses. Furniture and wallpaper advertisements started appearing in the Courier at least as early as 1897, and there were suggestions that furniture might be a profitable industry in Fairhope. (28)

Fairhope houses not only provided shelter for families and boarders, but also served a multiplicity of functions in a community where public buildings were scarce. Houses were sites for numerous meetings and parties, even weddings. The most unique usage would have to be Marie Howland's house doubling as the library. This proved to be a convenient solution that allowed Fairhope to have a library without waiting for the actual edifice to be built. Such an arrangement also made sense because the majority of the books came from the collection of Howland's late husband. This set-up lasted until the 1910s when a building was built specifically to house the library.

The level of comfort and style of the Fairhope houses progressively improved. Six years after the first houses were built Elizabeth Elgin wrote describing Fairhope, "Modern in architecture, comfortable and with a great many improvements, they [Fairhope houses] give the new and untried village a prosperous Western air." (29) Several noteworthy houses were built within the first decade. These houses had galleries and wide halls adapted from the Southern tradition, but steeply pitched roofs and still some central chimneys in the Northern



style. The builders often used the steeply pitched roofs to their full aesthetic advantage by punctuating the roofline with gables. Generally houses were at least one-and-one half stories, if not two with an attic.

In contrast to domestic architecture, construction of public buildings preceded rather slowly. In the realm of commercial buildings, several stores such as the Merston Bros. were soon extant, but a major structure such as the Fairhope Hotel took awhile to get off the ground. In lieu of having different buildings for different functions, the association building which began as a store took on a variety of usages and underwent several expansions during its career as Fairhope's meeting place.

The store was one of the first buildings constructed in 1895; however, the idea of an association store proved impracticable. In April of 1896, the Courier offered the building in the association's name for use as a school, library and meeting room. The Christian Church used the hall, as it came to be called, as a place of worship; and after they left for their own building, the Congregationalist Church made use of it. In 1896, programs were held in the space such as the Thursday night discussion series. A Progress League would meet there on Sunday afternoons and Saturday nights saw the hall used for a dancing class. As the center of community life, the hall saw several additions to meet increased demand for space for activities. In 1898 it was to be "thoroughly overhauled, ceiled and painted at once." (30) By 1900, the overhauling was not

enough and work toward expanding the building began which was finished in 1901. In 1902 a veranda was put across the front "somewhat improving the appearance of its' 'unique architecture.'" (31) After the hall, the most prominent building in the early days would be the Fairhope Hotel.

Since the time of settlement the Courier had called upon someone to put up a hotel in Fairhope, as the resort business was looked to as a possible industry. Finally in late 1897, this call became reality with the opening of the Fairhope Hotel, often referred to as the Fairhope House. The building was a two-story edifice completely surrounded by galleries on both floors. It had a dining room and a good view of the bay. Almost immediately it housed guests and offered space for meetings. The Courier praised the Fairhope House's charms for the benefit of non-resident readers, and informed them that it would be "attractive to people from the north because it is run by northerners and is in a northern community," once again articulating the retention of a Northern identity in Fairhope. (32) The Courier also reported that several townspeople dined at the Fairhope regularly for Sunday dinner suggesting that the hotel played a role in local life as well as catering to out-of-towners. (33) This catering, however, was made clear to be not for the "money is no object class." (34) The hotel was successful enough to warrant major expansions in July 1901 including an annex that added six more rooms. [See Figure I]

The next noteworthy building constructed was the Fairhope Christian Church, the first place of worship in Fairhope.

Building the church required securing a loan from the denomination, and the terms of the loan mandated that the congregation own the land on which the building was to be built.

(35) This caused the Christian Church to have to locate on a site adjacent to colony land, and prevents one from learning how the single tax would be applied to church land. Nevertheless the church proved to be a vital part of the community. Building contractor C.E. Littlefield drew the plans for the structure which was to have an "entrance through a corner vestibule with a tower above." (36) This is one of the first instances in Fairhope in which the word architect was used in describing the steps in the building process and implies a new sophistication. Littlefield's plan is almost identical to Downing's plan for a "rural church." [See Figure II] Whether Littlefield used Downing's plan or one like it is hard to ascertain, but it is reasonable to believe that such a building type would have become part of the carpenter's lore that Littlefield surely was aware of. The finished church, dedicated on May 19, 1901, was comprised of a 28 x 45 sanctuary with a corner tower measuring 10 x 10. (37) Rounding out the list of important public buildings built within the first decade is the school.

Like the church, the school started out in the association building and gradually got its own building. After years of negotiation with Baldwin County, a site was finally chosen for

the building, but no construction took place until 1905. [See Figure III] Once the school was completed, a small group including Marie Howland began to work for a school garden. The idea behind this was to create a place where children could learn about horticulture by tending their own gardens. Howland sent away to Massachusetts for information, as such an activity had been tried there. The congressman representing the area arranged for the Department of Agriculture to donate the seeds and plans were drawn for the Fairhope school garden. (38)

Probably the most touted benefit of the single tax was its encouragement of construction. The single tax did away with the tax advantage of leaving land undeveloped because the single tax did not apply to improvements on the land, just to the land value created by the community. Therefore the Courier was quick to note any building activity to show that their system was working. Indeed a construction industry came into its own in Fairhope, and several figures emerged to lead it. As there were no existing buildings in Fairhope at the time of settlement, they had to build every structure they needed. The first settlers did much of the work on their own houses, probably bringing in a carpenter to do the complicated work. As the town became more settled, one finds townspeople specializing in the building trades. Generally, construction was carried out by carpenter-contractors who would design and build the structure. (39) Since Fairhope was built almost entirely of wood, the carpenters would have been the natural supervisors on a job; and historically carpenters

have served in this capacity even where bricks and stone are the primary materials, thus a carpenter usually learned ideas about design as well as his basic trade. The notion of an architect, someone whose whole task is designing buildings is a modern revival of an ancient idea. When one included an architect in the building process, it implied that the building will be more than utilitarian. Fairhope gradually reached this level of sophistication as it became more settled and the building trades became more established.

One can see this transformation in the career of C.E. (Charles) Littlefield, a Fairhope contractor who called himself an architect as well. Littlefield ran a thriving contracting company, as well as a furniture store, and also served as a trustee of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation (the re-organized Fairhope Industrial Association). The Courier recommended him based on his "many years experience in this line," and his "having made a study of architecture." (40) What this study of architecture involved is not described, but the newspaper defined his style as "modern." Apparently non-residents could write to Littlefield for sample plans, indicating that he kept a file of plans on hand. If Littlefield tended to work from a set of standardized plans that would have served to unify the appearance of many Fairhope houses. The Courier did much to publicize Littlefield's work, congratulating him on the design of the Fairhope Christian Church and describing some of this finished works at length. The June 2, 1905 Courier described the Blank

cottage by Littlefield as a six room house, three rooms on each floor with a veranda in front. [See Figure IV] Interior decorations included yellow pine paneling and double doors. One of Littlefield's projects, the Beckner-Baker house has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. (41)

One of the interesting aspects of Littlefield's career is his involvement with building projects while he served on the executive body of the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation. Although Littlefield's responsibilities extended beyond building concerns, such as the lessees' committee and wharf accounts, he still sat on committees charged with studying colony building projects; these committees often produced proposals and plans for new buildings. This may have been for the sake of convenience because having an architect and builder on the various building committees saved time, but it also sounds like a conflict of interest. It may imply how direct the executive council's role was in building public structures. Clearly, Littlefield's style and knowledge of building helped shape the physical appearance of Fairhope.

Aside from the contractors, some primarily co-operative building ventures existed in Fairhope. Although it ostensibly had a profit-making motive, the Fairhope Exchange came into being as an attempt to pool scarce resources and erect badly needed buildings in the early years of Fairhope. The Fairhope exchange which included Dr. Atkinson as an organizer, tried to build houses so that there would be places for people to move into upon



arrival in Fairhope. The Exchange, though short-lived, circumvented one of the key problems construction faced in Fairhope, that of capital needed in order to build. Often benefactors would intervene, providing the necessary funds to get a proposed project off the drawing board. One such instance was the Fairhope Improvement Company (FIC). A Mr. R.F. Powell of Philadelphia set up the FIC in 1904 in order to build beach cottages which were badly needed for the nascent resort industry. Powell's part was raising capital for the venture, then the executive council decided on the particulars: two cottages were built on Fels Avenue during the winter of 1904-05, furnished with indoor plumbing and electricity. Possibly to attract attention from tourists, these houses sported more decoration than the average Fairhope house. (42)

Another communal activity that worked for the beautification of Fairhope, as well as providing get-togethers and activities was the Village Improvement Club (VIC). The Courier described its formation as "the ladies of Fairhope organized a new association which promises to be an important factor in the future development of Fairhope." (43) The first project the women of the VIC tackled was the erection of a pavilion for the park which would provide shelter for picnics. (44) Dr. Atkinson served as the first president and all the women of Fairhope were eligible for membership. Other projects taken up by the VIC were cleaning brush out of the park, sponsoring a Christmas Eve program for the community, holding a "New England" supper, and a Valentine's Day

Social to raise money for the school. Clearly, the VIC served to bring the colony together and also get work done for the community. Marie Howland called the VIC an "example of true co-operative spirit." (45)

A small-scale attempt at co-operative cooking did not succeed. This experiment, called the Economic Living Club, tried to concentrate the meal preparation for several households into one kitchen, that of a club officer, and the meals were also served in her home. (46) This club, however, ended up mainly serving widows and did not bring any radical change to the kitchens of Fairhope. (47) "Grand union dinners," however, were popular events held at locations such as the Fairhope House. The Courier boasted that there would be no "French and Italian high sounding names unintelligible except to the initiated" on the menu of a union dinner, once again proclaiming Fairhope's down-home modesty. (48) These events were a chance for the whole community to get together and "friends from abroad" were invited.

The Fairhoppers also approached the landscape as a community. They had a stated goal of developing a beautiful city that would attract tourists, but they also operated under the unstated agenda of Henry George's desire to instill love for the land in his countrymen. The colony council laid out Fairhope in keeping with a sensitivity to landscape. They planned wide streets that included curving stretches which broke the monotony of the usual grid. The constitution of the Fairhope Industrial Association stated that "ample provisions shall be made in platting the lands

of the association for land for parks and all other public purpose ... for the free use and enjoyment of the members and their families. (49) The development of the bay front park had the members in mind, but also the prospective tourists. The Courier stated that "our bay front park with a little labor expended upon it, will be incomparably the most delightful spot along the shore." (50) Members did make great use of the park, despite the emphasis on tourism. The Sunday afternoon discussion meetings were held there in which a small committee selected topics to be discussed, and music was also included. (51)

The attitude toward landscape had its sources in the single tax and the desire to be a resort, but evolved into a definite sensibility that distinguished Fairhope as unique and very progressive for its time. The colonists recognized that their location was especially beautiful, and the Courier was full of exaltations of the scenic quality of the site. The Fairhoppers enhanced the beauty by building in such a way to take advantage of the natural scenery. They widened the streets to the bay to allow each lot a view and terraced these lots uphill to enhance this view further. (52) They propagated local trees and flowers, planting them along streets. [See Figure V] This may have been excessive in one case in which someone complained to the Courier that the trees were where the future sidewalks were supposed to go. (53) The co-operative spirit that did all this was apparently genuine to the degree that Alice Carey Wilson remarked in her observations in the Courier that "a great deal of

volunteer work has been done in the colony in the matter of public improvements. The members are glad to assist in beautifying the village, since it does not enhance the value of property to any private landholder. (54) This spirit was not always consistent: in one instance when a man complained that his neighbors did not pick up their trash, (55) but overall every effort was made to enjoy the surroundings. In this aspect the Fairhoppers succeeded as far as George's vision of the single tax renewing a love for the land. As for the relationship between co-operative individualism and this environmental sensibility, it would seem that an individual love for nature lead people to co-operate to improve their natural surroundings.

The love for nature was one thing Fairhoppers probably had in common even before settlement. The nineteenth century placed great emphasis on nature which saw cultural phenomenons such as the growth in landscape painting, the development of the profession of landscape architecture, and nature playing a role in literature. E.T. Molyneux, a prospective colonist, told the Courier that he could not wait to come down to Fairhope in order to "get close to old Mother Earth" and smell the pines, hear the waves crashing, and listen to the birds sing. (56) The sensibility of the natural world around them served to join Fairhoppers together and provide them with a source of pride about their community.

Another value that Fairhoppers tried to exhibit was modesty and a lack of pretension. One outgrowth of this was to think

something did not have to be big and imposing to have worth which would be a corollary to the single tax vision of returning people to small land-oriented cities. The "closest thing to a mansion" was "The Columns" built in 1904, home of J.J. Magg. (57) The house had an imposing Neo-Classical revival facade with impressive giant order Ionic columns. Although Fairhoppers remarked about its striking appearance, "The Columns" saw no imitators. Ostentation was avoided as Fairhoppers liked to stay near the mean, and say that "there were no houses for rich nor were there shanties." (58) E.B. Gaston pointed out in an address that "some have been able to secure homes who might otherwise have hardly hoped to do so - certainly not so favorably located." (59) Fairhoppers held their homes dear and many gave them names. The naming process might seem to run counter to Fairhope's system of land ownership and emphasis on modesty because it is a practice generally reserved for prestigious ancestral homes. Marie Howland explained this whole phenomenon when she wrote:

"It is quite a common notion that you should not dignify your home by a special name unless it represents wealth and style. I think this is pure vanity, any home we become attached to from the time and labor we have devoted to beautifying it should be so honored. Of course it should be a settled home, not a temporary one." (60)

Fairhoppers' attitudes toward their homes reflected their commitment to the colony and represented the physical realization of the vision they strove for. C.L. Coleman felt so strongly about Fairhope he called it a "veritable paradise on earth." (61)

This paradise on earth would sound hard to replicate, but a 1902 Courier headline informed readers about the "Proposed English Fairhope." The organizers of this new community probably would not have referred to it as such because what they were trying to do was found a "Garden City." The Garden City movement originated with a book by Ebenezer Howard published in 1898 that incorporated the single tax along with other reform proposals into the unified vision of the Garden City that would cure all social ills. The Garden City was in many ways a more explicit expression of the vision of the single tax's environmentally-oriented utopia. Howard's version put more direct emphasis on landscape as the ultimate source of good that would alleviate the sordid conditions of life in industrial cities such as London. With the Garden City, the single tax plays a subordinate role in bringing about a more harmonious existence with nature. Fairhope, on the other hand, expected all good to flow from the single tax and co-operative individualism. Environmental sensitivity was one of these goods that resulted from the single tax as applied at Fairhope. Indeed Fairhope was starting to achieve some of the objectives Howard put forth before Howard's book was published.

Fairhope thus proved to be significant in the realm of design without specifically trying to do so. All it accomplished, it did so from a central thesis about taxation and co-operation. From modest means the Fairhoppers developed a distinctive style of building that was an amalgam of several



influences and used to express certain values. The Fairhoppers developed a commendable love for the environment, and used their attempts at landscape architecture to better achieve this, and worked together to create a better place for all. Their approach to architecture served to bring the community together in the sense of usage, or symbolically as the expression of their commonly held ideas.

### End Notes

- (1) Alan Gowans, The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 19.
- (2) Dolores Hayden, Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), p. 48.
- (3) Hayden, Seven American Utopias, p. 35.
- (4) John Sledge Interview, Nov. 4, 1988.
- (5) Andrew Jackson Downing, The Architecture of Country Houses. (New York: Appleton, 1850), p. v.
- (6) Sledge Interview
- (7) Fairhope Courier, January 1, 1895.
- (8) John L. Thomas. Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the Adversary Tradition. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 123.
- (9) Henry George. Progress and Poverty. (New York: Random House, [1879]). pp. 470-471.
- (10) Annette Parker Burr. "Attitudes Toward Art and Architecture in Late Nineteenth-Century American Utopian Novels." (Master's Thesis, University of Virginia, 1984), p. 29.
- (11) Edward Bellamy. Looking Backward. (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1946 [1888]), p. 22.
- (12) Courier, February 15, 1895.
- (13) Minutes, Fairhope Industrial Association, December 15, 1894.
- (14) Minutes, FIA, December 27, 1894.
- (15) Courier, March 15, 1895.
- (16) Minutes, FIA, January 2, 1895.
- (17) Courier, January 1, 1895.
- (18) Courier, October, 15, 1901.
- (19) Courier, May 1, 1895.
- (20) Courier, June 1, 1898.

- (21) Sledge Interview.
- (22) Courier, March 15, 1899.
- (23) Courier, March 15, 1899.
- (24) Sledge Interview.
- (25) Courier, October 1, 1896.
- (26) Courier, May 1, 1899.
- (27) Courier, August 1, 1902.
- (28) Courier, May 15, 1895.
- (29) Courier, January 1, 1901.
- (30) Courier, December 15, 1898.
- (31) Courier, May 1, 1902.
- (32) Courier, November 1, 1897.
- (33) Courier, June 1, 1898.
- (34) Courier, December 15, 1899.
- (35) Courier, April 1, 1899.
- (36) Courier, February 1, 1900.
- (37) Courier, June 1, 1901.
- (38) Courier, February 7, 1905.
- (39) Sledge Interview.
- (40) Courier, Feb. 7, 1905.
- (41) Sledge Interview.
- (42) Sledge Interview.
- (43) Courier, February 1, 1899.
- (44) Courier, February 1, 1899.
- (45) Courier, June 15, 1899.
- (46) Courier, March 1, 1901.

- (47) Paul M. Gaston Women of Fair Hope. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), p. 59.
- (48) Courier, November 15, 1898.
- (49) Courier, January 1, 1896.
- (50) Courier, September 15, 1895.
- (51) Courier, September 1, 1896.
- (52) Sledge Interview.
- (53) Courier, April 15, 1899.
- (54) Courier, March 1, 1899.
- (55) Courier, December 15, 1900.
- (56) Courier, December 15, 1900.
- (57) Sledge Interview.
- (58) Sledge Interview.
- (59) Courier, November 1, 1898.
- (60) Courier, March 1, 1901.
- (62) Courier, May 15, 1895.

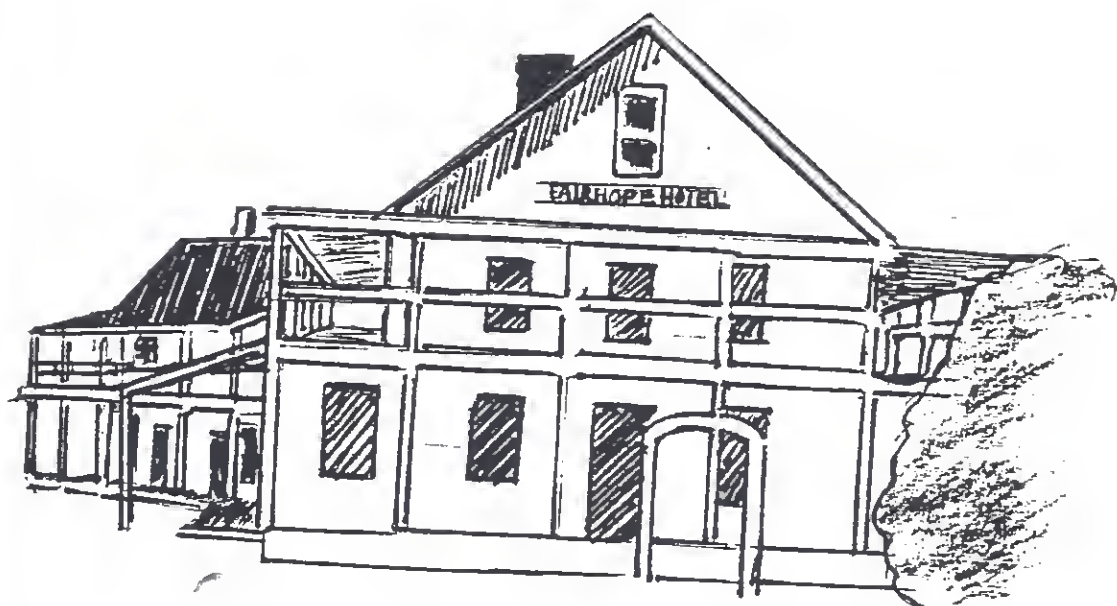
Illustrations

Figure I.

The Fairhope Hotel after the addition of the annex which can be seen at rear. Taken from a photograph in the March 1, 1904 Fairhope Courier.



Fig. 137.

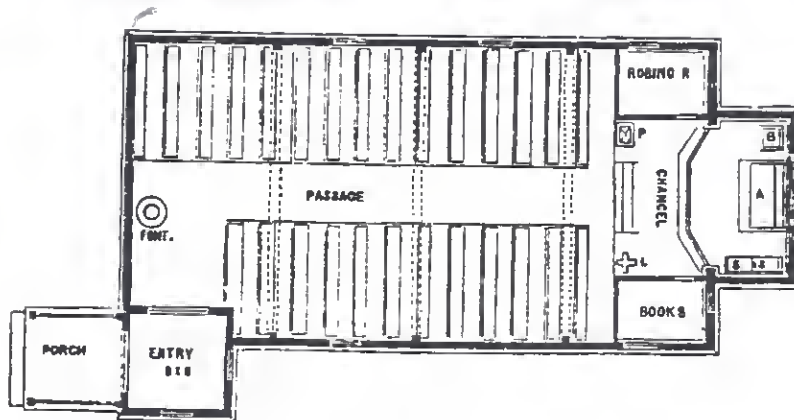


Fig. 138.

Figure II.

Andrew Jackson Downing's plan for a "Rural Church." A picturesque Gothic revival structure, the Rural Church shares a similar plan to C.E. Littlefield's design for the Fairhope Christian Church. Illustration from the frontispiece to Victorian Cottage Residences.





Figure III.

The Fairhope School soon after completion. This building has several interesting features including the modified bell tower and the gabled portico which is vaguely classical. From a photograph in the February 3, 1905 Courier.

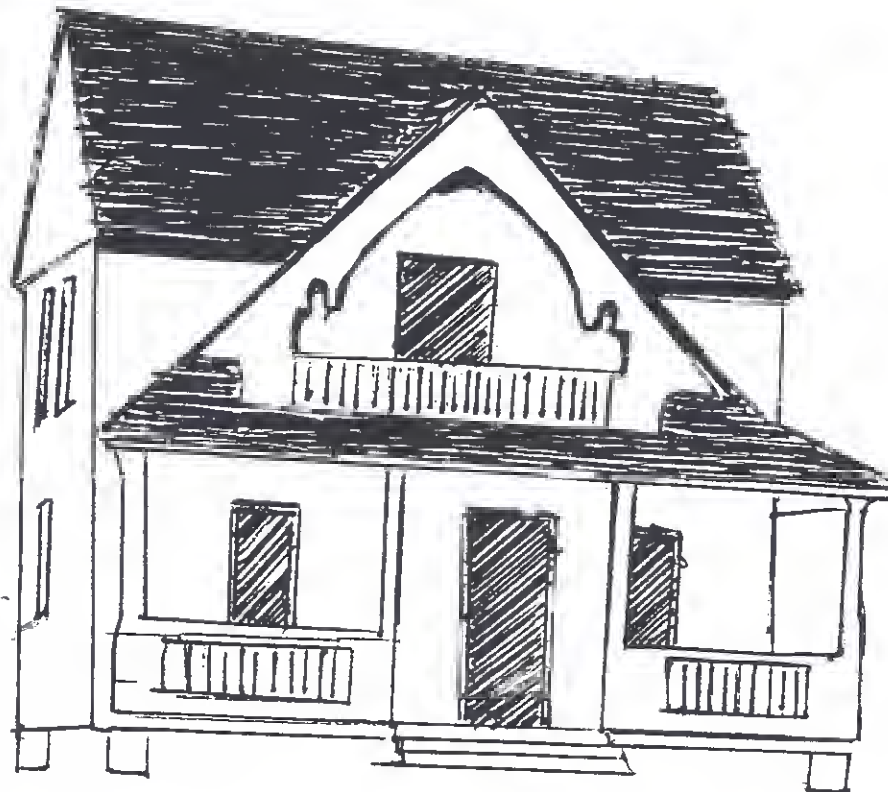


Figure IV.

The Blank House by C.E. Littlefield. The slightly Gothic arch in the upstairs balcony gives this house some stylistic flair. Taken from a photograph in the June 2, 1905 Courier.

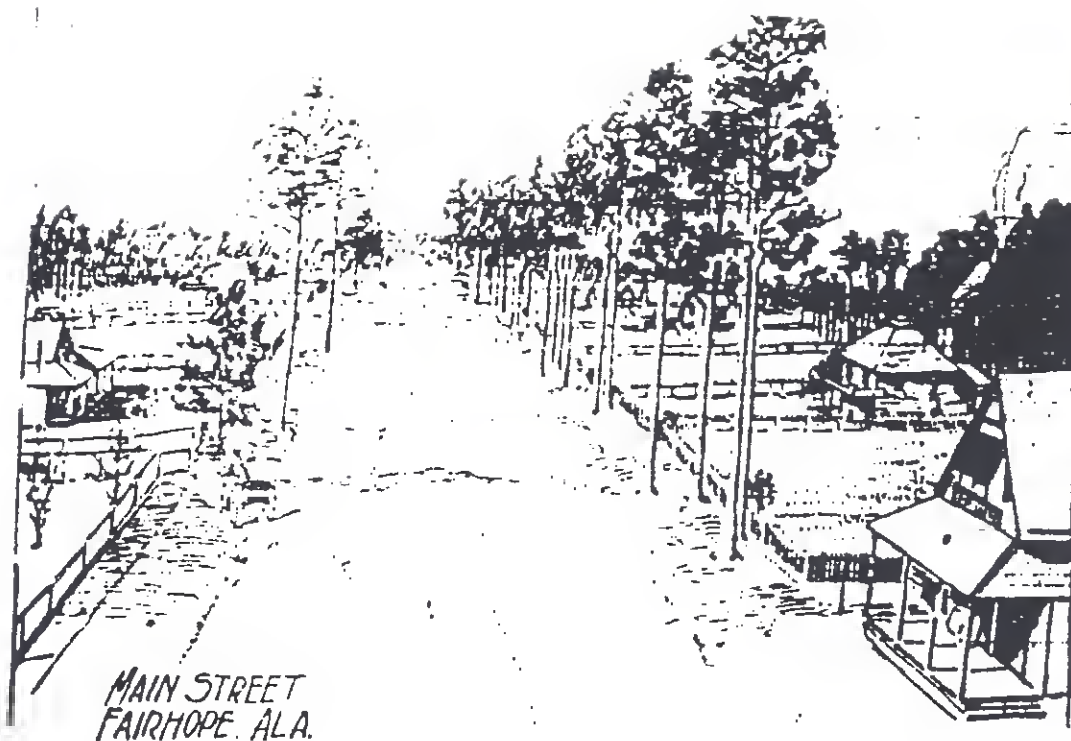


Figure V.

A rendition of Fairhope's main street that appeared in the March 15, 1901 Courier. This drawing shows the tree-lined streets that Fairhoppers included in their urban design scheme.

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